



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Changes to Kazakhstan's Law on Elections

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is very deeply concerned about the Parliament of Kazakhstan's approval on April 8 of additional changes to the Law on Elections.

One of the key amendments imposes significant restrictions on a very, very important right, which is the freedom of assembly.

As amended, the law would prohibit rallies, it would prohibit demonstrations, it would prohibit public gatherings that are either organized by candidates or in which candidates participate in the period between end of the electoral campaign and the official publication of the election results, which can be a very critical period – and in that timeframe, it prohibits rallies, demonstrations and other public gatherings.

, The United States very much concurs with ODIHR's assessment that this amendment is contrary to Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments and to other international standards.

We understand that despite the fact that the OSCE was formally invited to review the legislation, the Parliament did not take ODIHR's preliminary analysis into account or allow sufficient time for a complete review.

Allowing this bill to become law would seriously call into question Kazakhstan's commitment to democratic reform and its suitability to be a viable candidate for chairmanship of OSCE.

We understand that the Law will be forwarded to President Nazarbayev for approval. We urge President Nazarbayev to postpone signing this law until the Parliament has had time to review the OSCE's analysis and make any necessary revisions to ensure that the law meets Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments.

We encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to continue work on its electoral legislation with a view to implementing as soon as possible all of the recommendations ODIHR made last year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.